

VZCZCXRO5845
OO RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #1117/01 1731422
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 221422Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6360
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0399
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1963
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0922
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 1545
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001117

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LABOR RALLY IN KANO ACHIEVES BETTER
TURNOUT, BUT NO PROGRESS ON KEY ISSUES

REF: A. ABUJA 821

[1](#)B. ABUJA 809

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and other state labor leaders conducted a rally in Kano on July 16, protesting the GON's lack of leadership and action on deregulation of the petroleum sector, minimum wage, and electoral reform issues. The Kano demonstration is the second in a series of planned protests throughout the country focusing on these themes (ref A describes last month's Lagos protest). While we do not know the exact size of the Kano demonstration, most evidence suggests that it was bigger than the one in Lagos, so the NLC's planned protest rallies in Borno, Benue, and Oyo states, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), will likely go ahead as announced. These protest rallies also demonstrate the GON's weak response to organized labor demands, as well as the private sector's growing disassociation with government and unions, and are another illustration of Nigeria's fractured labor sector. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) NLC General Secretary John Odah told Laboff that their June 16 Kano demonstration mobilized close to 50,000 people (Comment: Probably something of an exaggeration. End comment), who protested the GON's deregulation of the petroleum sector, its refusal to formally raise the minimum wage, and its inability to implement electoral reform recommendations that organized labor provided as a member of the Electoral Reform Committee. Odah deemed the protest "a huge success" that will "inspire great momentum" for planned protest rallies in Maiduguri (Borno State), Makurdi (Benue State), Ibadan (Oyo State), and Abuja (Federal Capital Territory). According to a USAID contractor in Kano, there was good turnout, but he acknowledged it was impossible to determine the actual size of the demonstration. A Kano businessman described the protest to Econ Deputy as not having any perceived effect on daily activity because of the existing poor state of traffic congestion, power outages, and other interruptions to business. One Nigerian newspaper reported that the event was "massive," but noted there were no reports of violent clashes or other major disruptions.

Two other news reports quoted NLC President Abdulwaheed Omar as warning that he will not hesitate to mobilize enough supporters to cause a complete nation-wide shutdown if the GON continues to ignore labor's concerns.

¶3. (U) Comment: The labor protest rally in Kano was the second in a series of rallies that the NLC is planning across the country to protest the GON's failure to address its concerns. The first of these protest rallies, held in Lagos, was unimpressive and had low turnout. While we suspect that the Kano demonstration was bigger than Lagos, there is no indication that it generated enough momentum to help generate a nation-wide strike or change government policy. In addition, Nigeria's other major labor union umbrella organization, the Trade Union Congress (TUC), was conspicuously absent from both the protest rally and the media reports, possibly indicating a disjointed strategy within organized labor. Meanwhile, the National Employer Consultative Association (NECA), representing Nigeria's private sector, is dissociating itself from government and organized labor altogether. Combined, such discordance within Nigeria's labor sector, (which we specifically noted from the dramatic incongruence in ideologies among government, organized labor, and the private sector at Nigeria's Labor Summit on April 23; reftel B) are further examples of how the lack of a structured tripartite social dialogue interferes with the ability of Nigerians to address their differences. End Comment.

¶4. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

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